



**Department of the Army
North Atlantic Regional Medical Command/Walter Reed Army Medical Center
Telemedicine Directorate
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20307-5001**

**Telemedicine
Directorate**

<http://telemedicine.wramc.amedd.army.mil/>

TMED Imaging Center
(202) 782-4028

Email

NARMCTelemedicine@amedd.army.mil

Other Websites

www.narmc.amedd.army.mil

www.wramc.amedd.army.mil

Web-Based TeleDermatology

Teledermatology provides accurate and rapid diagnosis of dermatological conditions and is becoming widely accepted as a normal business practice. The use of secure, Web-based store-and-forward Telemedicine technology to provide diagnostic and consultative evaluation at remote referral hospitals will reduce the need for time-consuming transportation and unnecessary referrals. This is especially important in the case of active duty patients where rapid return to duty is mission essential.

In response to the NARMC and Tri-service Teledermatology consortium requirement, the NARMC Telemedicine Directorate has developed a secure system designed to allow medical treatment facilities throughout the Region to submit dermatology consults. The system includes a password protected and encrypted World Wide Web connection to a dedicated Web server housed at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), as well as a computerized patient record. A digital camera is used to capture dermatological conditions.

When a remote site physician decides to do a Teledermatology consult, that physician completes a simple consult request form and provides it to the Telemedicine Consult Manager. The Consult Manager meets with the patient and provides the patient a Telemedicine information sheet, has the patient sign the consent form, photographs the patient and enters the information into the Web-based system.

Once the consult is entered into the system, dermatologists at WRAMC are notified by an automatically system generated email to access the Teledermatology Web Server and evaluate the consult. Prior studies from WRAMC have shown that more than 50% of all Teledermatology consults can be successfully completed without ever requiring the patient to travel to a dermatologist. This Web-based technology is able to reduce patient care costs, increase access to subspecialty care, and provide a teaching tool to general medical personnel throughout the Region. The Teledermatology system was first deployed in the NARMC in 1997.

The system has been deployed throughout the Medical Command, to the Brook Army Medical Center, TX, the Eisenhower Army Medical Center, GA, the Madigan Army Medical Center, WA, and to the Landstuhl Army Medical Center located in Germany. Between the five Army Medical Centers, over 4,000 consults have been completed.

The system has undergone an Independent Validation and Verification (IV&V). Patent pending.

Contact the NARMC Telemedicine Directorate at NARMC.Telemedicine@na.amedd.army.mil or the Project Manager at (202) 356-1012 extension 27918.

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